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Cultural Heritage

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"A country with no regard for its past will have little worth remembering in the future."

—Abraham Lincoln

Please Help Protect America's Past



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Located on the Chestatee Ranger District near Dahlonega, Georgia, this steatite outcrop provided a natural resource from which American Indians before 2000 B.C. manufactured containers such as bowls. Steatite, a soft rock and "easily" carved, was later abandoned as the technology for making pottery spread throughout the Southeast.



This archaeological excavation in east central Texas has uncovered two distinct occupations, a Late Archaic (Ca. B.C. 1000 - A.D. 1000) trash midden and below it an Early Archaic (Ca. B.C. 7000 - B.C. 3500) living floor. A thin red-brown soil layer separates the Early Archaic layer of scattered hearthstones from the Late Archaic midden — the thick, dark gray layer. These kinds of differences in soil color and texture help archaeologists find and interpret the different occupations at a site.



This evidence of the past is part of America's cultural heritage which belongs to all Americans. It is our legacy, left to us by peoples who lived in our land, met the challenge of the environment without modern technology, and left us a cultural heritage which extends back over 10,000 years. This heritage is a precious gift from generations of past Americans.

The Forest Service manages these cultural resources in a manner which recognizes their significance and provides their protection. The search for information about the history and prehistory of the South is a continuing task. When the Forest Service completes its inventory of cultural resources, it will use the information to clarify the story of human occupation of the South.

You can help preserve America's cultural heritage by leaving archaeological and historical remains undisturbed, encouraging others to do the same, and reporting your discoveries to Forest Service personnel. Collecting artifacts or disturbing sites on National Forest land without written permission is prohibited under terms of the Federal Antiquities Act of 1906.





By the mid-1800's, the late 18th century community of Scull Shoals had become a thriving manufacturing, trade, and distribution center. Located on the Oconee River, it was always dependent on water travel for its commercial growth. As the river silted over and flooding increased, the town declined rapidly and was finally abandoned. This land is now part of the Chattahoochee N.F. The photograph above is of the main warehouse in the mid 1800's. Little of this building remains standing today, in large part because people have knocked over the walls and taken the bricks (insert).

Elizabeth Furnace (George Washington National Forest) was built in 1836 as a hot-blast charcoal furnace. Rebuilt in 1862 to meet Civil War demands for iron, the 33- by 9-foot, one-stack furnace stayed in blast until 1876-77 with an annual capacity of 3,200 tons.





Like a great history book, your National Forests in the South hold the story of more than 8,000 years of human occupation. Most of us know about the major historical events related to settlement by early French and Spanish colonists, trappers, agriculturists, and loggers. But we seldom realize that over 99 percent of the record of human life in North America was made by countless numbers of people who did not leave a written record — American Indians.

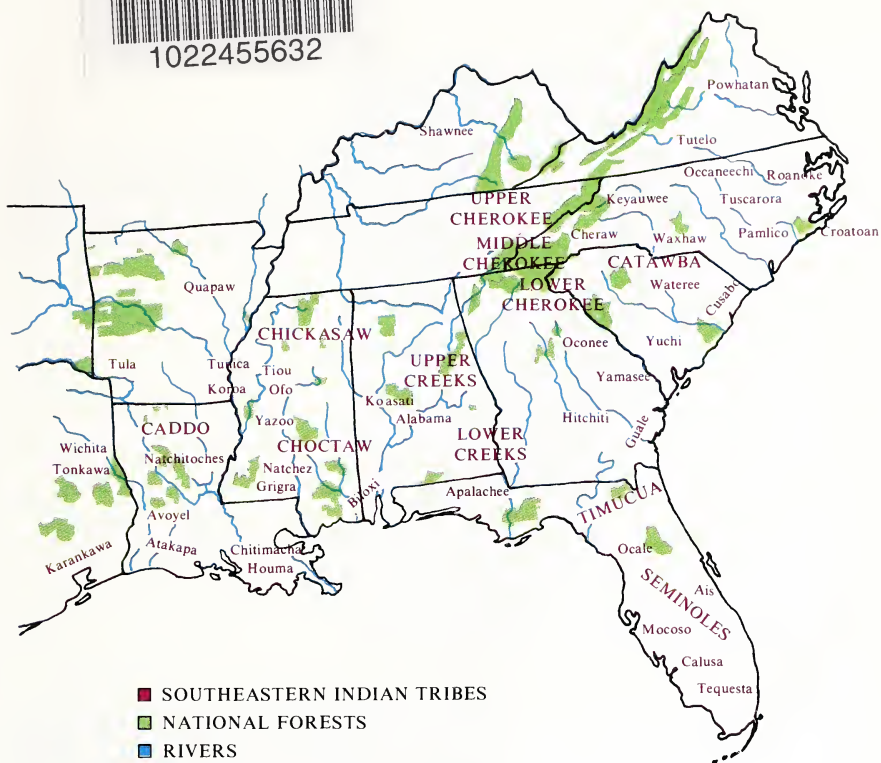
Without written records we must look for other evidence of the way humans lived in the past, evidence existing on the ground in the form of prehistoric and historic archaeological objects and sites — the physical remains of human behavior. These cultural resources include rock shelters, campsites, petroglyphs, old buildings, pottery, arrow points, stone tools, and historic farmsteads, to name only a few.

Archaeologists can examine these remains and, with many new methods and techniques of recovery and analysis, interpret the past with great accuracy. But once a single object is carelessly removed from a prehistoric or early historic site, the record is damaged and incomplete — much as a book would be incomplete if words were erased or pages torn from it.





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COVER ILLUSTRATIONS:

Indian petroglyphs (carvings on rocks) are uncommon in the Southeast. This at Track Rock Gap (Chattahoochee National Forest, Georgia) is one of six rocks carved with animal, human, and other symbols. To the Cherokee, Track Rock was a landmark on the route from Cherokee towns along the Hiwassee River to towns in northern Georgia. The carvings were also known to Anglos and were mentioned in early accounts of travel in the South. The Forest Service tries to protect these remains from vandalism, although it is difficult to keep people from defacing the petroglyphs and carving initials on them.

Caddoan engraved bowl from the Caddoan Culture area, northeast Texas, around 1100-1300 A.D. This well-executed design appears to be a flying star.

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